



Region 8
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Colorado, South Dakota,
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Montana, Utah

EPA Announces the Final Cleanup Decision for Residential Soils in the VB/I-70 Superfund Site

Denver, Colorado

October 2003

The Record of Decision and other VB/I-70 information can be found at these locations:

Cross Community
Coalition, 2332 East 46th
Street

Valdez-Perry Library
4690 Vine Street

Ford Warren Library
2835 High Street

EPA Records Center
999 18th Street, 3rd Fl.

or, visit the Web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/region08/superfund/sites/co/vbi70.html>

or contact:
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(303) 312-6601; or

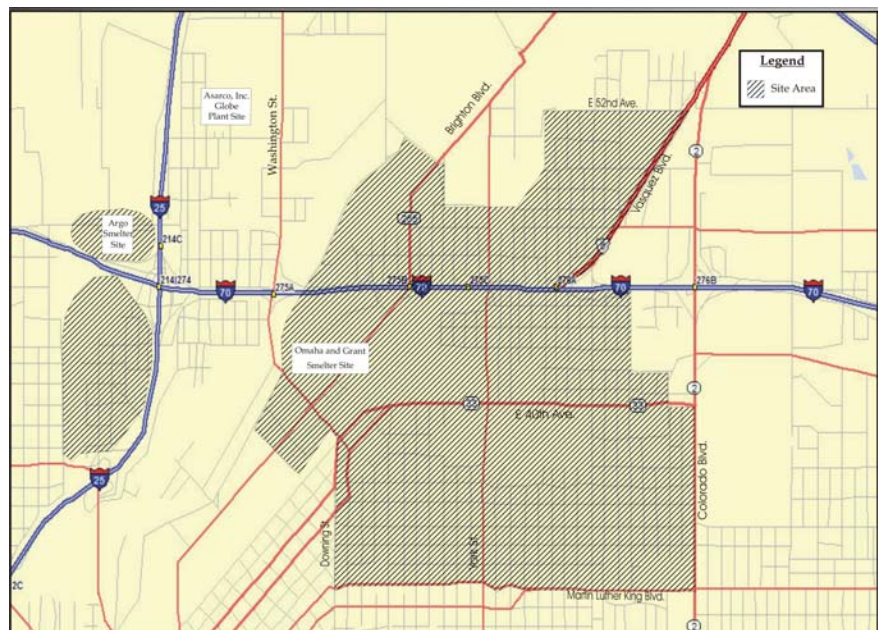
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Introduction

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proud to announce the final cleanup decision for the residential soils portion of the Vasquez Boulevard/Interstate 70 (VB/I-70) Superfund Site in northeast Denver. EPA has been working for more than four years with community representatives and local, state, and federal governmental agencies to investigate elevated levels of lead and arsenic in the soils of yards in the area.

On September 25, 2003, EPA and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) signed a Record of Decision (ROD). The Record of Decision is the formal document that describes the cleanup plan. This fact sheet discusses the details of the Record of Decision and answers many frequently asked questions about the cleanup.



VB/I-70 Superfund Site



The Community

VB/I-70 includes the Denver neighborhoods of Cole, Clayton, Swansea, Elyria, southwest Globeville, and a northern section of Curtis Park. According to the 2000 Census, the total population living within these neighborhoods is 17,545, including approximately 2,400 children six years old or younger. EPA considers the VB/I-70 Superfund Site an Environmental Justice Site. This is because the neighborhood residents are predominately low-income and minority. It is also because the area has more sources of environmental pollution than are found together in most other parts of the city. These pollution sources include industry, other Superfund sites, and major transportation corridors.

Due to the Environmental Justice nature of the community, EPA has worked hard to be as inclusive and fair as possible during this environmental investigation and will continue this approach during the cleanup. The affected neighborhoods are represented by many committed community representatives. Their continued participation and input has been very valuable to EPA throughout this entire process, and has led to a cleanup decision supported by the community as well as EPA and the other agencies involved.

The Investigation

CDPHE led a cleanup during the 1990s in Globeville, next to the VB/I-70 neighborhoods, that indicated some yards in the VB/I-70 neighborhoods could have high levels of heavy metals. In 1998, EPA began investigating the nature and extent of metals contamination in VB/I-70 yards. Over the next few years, in collaboration with CDPHE, other governmental agencies, and community representatives, EPA extensively sampled area yards and produced numerous studies. The results showed that lead and arsenic are the two primary metals of concern in VB/I-70 soils. We learned that some yards have high enough levels of either lead or arsenic that EPA will remove and replace those soils to protect the health of the residents living there.

EPA already replaced soils at nearly 50 homes, and is currently replacing soils at more than 140 homes this fall. These yards had some of the highest levels of lead and/or arsenic measured, and posed a health risk to residents there.

The Final Decision

The VB/I-70 Record of Decision (ROD) is a document that describes EPA's final cleanup decision for those remaining yards with elevated levels of lead and/or arsenic in the VB/I-70 neighborhoods. The cleanup will consist of three parts: soil removal and replacement, a community health program, and on-going soil sampling.

Soil Removal: EPA will remove and replace soil at yards where the average lead concentration is above **400 parts per million (ppm)**. EPA will also remove and replace soil at yards where the highest arsenic concentration is above **70 ppm**. These soil removals are voluntary and will be completed at no cost to the homeowner. EPA estimates that approximately 850 yards will require a soil removal and replacement. The work is expected to take three to five years to complete.

Community Health Program: Some children in the VB/I-70 Superfund Site have levels of lead in their blood high enough to be a health concern. However, children may be exposed to many different sources of lead such as lead paint in their homes.. In addition, some children exhibit a behavior called Soil Pica. These children intentionally eat unusually large amounts of soil, and are thus exposed to arsenic and lead at very low levels in the soil, as well as bacteria and possibly other harmful substances.

Since residents and children in VB/I-70 are in an Environmental Justice area, and are exposed to a variety of environmental impacts, EPA designed the Community Health Program to complement the soil removals. The Community Health Program is an outreach program that will provide residents with health information about lead exposure in general, Soil Pica behavior, and any number of other environmental health topics.

The Community Health Program will also provide testing for any child in the VB/I-70 area for exposure to lead and arsenic. If any child tests high for lead or arsenic, the Community Health Program will provide for environmental and health care professionals to respond to and help that child.

The Community Health Program will be tailored individually to each neighborhood's

particular needs. The Program will continue through the duration of the soil cleanup work.

Soil Sampling: Since beginning the VB/I-70 investigation, EPA sampled yard soils at more than 3,000 of the 4,000 affected homes in the area. However, nearly 1,000 yards in the VB/I-70 area still have not been sampled. Soil sampling is done at any property within the VB/I-70 boundaries for free, though EPA must be granted access to sample by the property owner. For the duration of the cleanup, EPA will continue to attempt to gain access at those properties that have not been sampled.

Overall, the final cleanup plan for VB/I-70 will cost approximately \$31 million. The plan is based on Alternative 6 from EPA's Proposed Cleanup Plan issued in May 2003. EPA received public comment on that Proposed Plan for 30 days. Based on those comments and support for Alternative 6 from community representatives, CDPHE and other agencies, EPA selected Alternative 6 as the final cleanup plan. The selected remedy meets all federal and state requirements and mandates and is protective of human health and the environment.

Frequently Asked Questions

Based on formal public comments, informal group discussions, and individual conversations, EPA is aware of certain common concerns and questions about the final cleanup plan and about the environmental investigation in general. Some of these questions are listed below.

Q. Why are some yards being cleaned up, but others are not?

A. Not all yards need to be cleaned up. Only about 850 of the 4,000 homes in the area have levels of lead and/or arsenic high enough to require a cleanup.

Q. How can my neighbor need his soil removed but I don't, and we live next door to each other?

A. We discovered that it is very common for one yard to have high levels of lead and/or arsenic and the yard next door to have very low levels. We believe this is at least partly because the source of the contamination and the history of the property.

Q. How do I qualify to have my yard cleaned up?

A. EPA will sample your soil for free. If you have levels of lead above 400 ppm or arsenic above 70 ppm, then you qualify for a cleanup.

Q. How long will I have to wait to have my soil cleaned up?

A. The entire cleanup project could take from three to five years. Right now, we cannot tell you if your yard will be in next year's cleanup or in one of the following years

Q. Has my yard been sampled?

A. To find out, simply call one of the EPA representatives listed on the first page of this fact sheet.

Q. Can EPA remove lead paint from the outside and inside of our home, as well as from our soil?

A. Through the Community Health Program, EPA will coordinate with other federal, state, or local agencies that can provide funding for and/or conduct lead paint removal. Superfund dollars may be used to remove exterior lead paint at homes where the soil is replaced, but only after determining that other funding sources are not available. Superfund dollars cannot be used to remove lead paint on the interior of homes.

Q. When will we receive more details on the Community Health Program?

A. The Community Health program will be developed in a collaborative process beginning this winter. The community will receive information as soon as it is available.

Next Steps

Throughout this fall, EPA will continue to welcome access to any yards that have not yet been sampled within the VB/I-70 area. EPA will also finish removing and replacing soils at more than 140 yards that have the highest levels of lead and arsenic.

This winter, EPA, Denver Department of Environmental Health, CDPHE, community representatives, and other organizations and agencies will begin to develop the details of the Community Health Plan. Look for information about that Plan in your mailbox in upcoming months.

Next spring, EPA will begin removing and replacing those yards with lead levels above 400 ppm and/or arsenic above 70 ppm. If your yard needs a cleanup, EPA will contact you by phone and by mail in advance.